



Our call to worship today began with the apostle John's testimony in chapter one of his gospel, where he said, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (v. 14). In celebration of this truth, I'll be preaching a three-part sermon series titled "Glory to the Newborn King!" All three sermons are based on the first one and a half chapters of Matthew's Gospel. So, go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter one (page 757 in the pew Bible).

Today we'll consider the *ancestry* of the King in verses 1-17. On Christmas Eve we'll focus on the *arrival* of the King in verses 18-25. On Christmas Day, we will behold the *adoration* of the King in chapter 2, verses 1-12. Let's look at what Matthew has to say about the ancestry of the King.

<sup>1</sup>The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

<sup>2</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup>and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, <sup>4</sup>and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>5</sup>and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, <sup>7</sup>and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, <sup>8</sup>and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup>and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup>and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup>and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup>And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, <sup>13</sup>and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, <sup>14</sup>and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, <sup>15</sup>and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, <sup>16</sup>and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

<sup>17</sup>So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

- Matthew 1:1-17

A few days ago I read an article on twenty-five terrible ways to start a book.<sup>1</sup> The top mistake listed was “giving information and [the] backstory, rather than starting the actual story.” The third worst mistake listed was “introducing too many characters.”<sup>2</sup> On this point the writing expert says, “Nobody likes meeting 20 people at the same time, in real life or in fiction. So do your reader a favor and stick with a few important characters in the first chapter. Meaning two, or three, or four.” Well, Matthew begins his book with nearly fifty characters, and they’re all part of the back story!

Why would Matthew start his book with a list of names? Some would say this is creative writing at its worst ... a quick fix for insomnia ... how *not* to get on the best-sellers’ list. Even now you might be thinking that instead of this book starting with a bang, it’s already a bore.

That may seem to be the case. But you can be sure that Matthew’s Jewish readers were anything but bored by these opening paragraphs. In fact, they would’ve felt like Matthew had just dropped a bomb into their laps. That’s because Jews considered genealogies to be vital and therefore kept meticulous records. And going by this record, Matthew is establishing Jesus’ credentials as the long-awaited Messiah, the Anointed One of God, whose coming had been foretold for centuries.

Matthew is a Jew writing to Jews about a Jew who claimed to be the King of the Jews. If you’re Matthew, and you’re attempting to prove that Jesus is the King, where do you begin? With his *royal credentials*. And the only way to establish those royal credentials is through his family tree.

When it came to proof of a person’s ancestry, the Jews took nothing for granted. They were keeping meticulous genealogical records thousands of years before Ancestry.com came on the scene. Search the Scriptures and you’ll see that genealogies appear in the earliest chapters of Genesis all the way through the time of Moses, the Israeli monarchy, the Babylonian captivity, and the post-exilic period when the Jews returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. That’s where Old Testament history ends, and the Matthew reviews this record continues the genealogy all the way through to Jesus Christ.

Genealogies were crucial because they proved a person’s ancestry. This was essential for owning land, for receiving an inheritance, and especially for meeting the qualifications of a priest or king.

So, consider how much *more* vital a genealogy would be for someone claiming to be the Messiah? One would have to present an air-tight case of his qualifications by providing proof of his royal ancestry. That’s exactly what Matthew does in reference to Jesus.

***Jesus’ royal credentials uniquely qualified him  
as God’s anointed King.***

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<sup>1</sup> The actual title of the article is “25 Ways to Start a Novel.” Bookfox [online]. Retrieved on 15 December 2022 at <https://thejohnfox.com/2016/11/how-to-start-a-novel/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy back to King David and beyond him all the way back to Abraham the father of the nation Israel. Notice again Matthew's opening statement: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (v. 1). That introduction would have seized the attention of any Jewish reader. Most Jews would have been shocked by such an assertion and would have immediately demanded proof for it. After all, "Christ" is not Jesus' last name, it's a title. It's the Greek translation of the Hebrew title "Messiah."

So, Matthew begins his book by declaring, "Here is the genealogical record for Jesus the Messiah, who is a descendant of David, who is the descendant of Abraham." That is a loaded statement, for it indicates the fulfillment of two major Messianic prophecies:

### **Prophetic Statements**

1. The Messiah would be of the seed of Abraham, through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 22:18).
2. The Messiah would be a descendant of David, and God would establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:16).

God's covenants with Abraham and David were unilateral, unconditional, and unbreakable. They centered on God's promise of a Savior-King whose reign would never end. At the very beginning of his Gospel, Matthew insists that these prophetic promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

If you're familiar with the Old Testament, then you'll recognize many names in this genealogy, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Boaz, David, and his son Solomon. It's worth noting that Solomon was not David's oldest son, but he was the son who succeeded David on the throne. So, because Matthew is tracing the *royal* ancestry, he follows the line of descent through Solomon. Luke, on the other hand, seems to trace Jesus' biological line through Mary, who was descended from David's son Nathan. So, Jesus is descended from David through both the royal line of Joseph and the biological line of Mary. Through his genealogy, Jesus is doubly verified as the true King.

### **Purposeful Summary**

"and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah."

- Matthew 1:7-8

Compare this text with the royal genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:10-12, and you'll see that Matthew goes directly from Joram to Uzziah and skips over the three generations of kings between them.<sup>3</sup> This is "a kind of genealogical shorthand."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah.

<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005): 1119.

### Why the Shortened Genealogy?

- **Symmetry** – As Matthew notes in verse 17, all the persons listed above make up fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.
- **Significance of David** – David was Israel’s greatest king, a man after God’s own heart, and God promised to establish his throne forever. David appears in the middle of the genealogy, and – get this – the numerical value of his name (DVD) equals 14.<sup>5</sup> You see, the Hebrew alphabet is comprised of twenty-two consonants. Vowel points were added for pronunciation purposes, but they are not part of the written alphabet. So, the name David, transliterated into English, would look like DVD.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{DAVID} \\
 \text{D} = 4 \\
 \text{V} = 6 \\
 \text{D} = 4
 \end{array}
 \left. \vphantom{\begin{array}{r} \text{D} = 4 \\ \text{V} = 6 \\ \text{D} = 4 \end{array}} \right\} 14$$

In Hebrew, D (Daleth) is the fourth letter and V (vau) is the sixth letter. Four plus six plus four equals fourteen. So, the number fourteen not only makes Matthew’s genealogy symmetrical, but it also shows the significance of King David as Jesus’ royal ancestor.

There’s a third reason why Matthew shortened his genealogy: for the sake of *simplicity*.

- **Simplicity** – Having a shorter list makes the genealogy easier to remember. Some might think, “This list of names is still too long to remember!” But many children and adults would disagree, because they have memorized this list of names by learning a song based on this text. The song is titled “Matthew’s Begats” and is based on the King James Version of Matthew 1. Whereas most English translations say, “Abraham was *the father of* Isaac, and Isaac *the father of* Jacob,” the KJV says, “Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob” and so on and so forth. To “beget” means “to procreate or generate (offspring).”

The life of each ancestor of Jesus tells a story, and it’s part of a much bigger story, *God’s* story, that centers on his Son, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>5</sup>Unlike English, the Hebrew alphabet is a consonantal one, having no separate vowels in the written alphabet, though some letters can function as “consonantal vowels.” This does not mean that vowels are not used in Hebrew. (It’s virtually impossible to say anything at all without vowel sounds.) But ancient Hebrew contained no written vowels as distinct letter forms: the actual vowel sounds were “added” to the reading by means of oral tradition and long-established usage.  
[http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit\\_Two/Introduction/introduction.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_Two/Introduction/introduction.html).

To demonstrate God's sovereignty over every detail of this story, I want to draw your attention to one part of the genealogy in particular. Verse 11 says, "and Josiah [was] the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon." There's a major issue involving Jeconiah. Jeconiah (a.k.a. Jehoiachin) was a wicked king, whom God was determined to punish on account of his sin. God delivered the following message through Jeremiah the prophet:

**Jeremiah 22:24-30**  
**(New Living Translation)**

"As surely as I live," says the Lord, "I will abandon you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Even if you were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek to kill you, those you so desperately fear – to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the mighty Babylonian army. I will expel you and your mother from this land, and you will die in a foreign country, not in your native land.

"You will never again return to the land you yearn for.

"Why is this man Jehoiachin like a discarded, broken jar? Why are he and his children to be exiled to a foreign land?

"O earth, earth, earth! Listen to this message from the Lord!

"This is what the Lord says: 'Let the record show that this man Jehoiachin was childless. He is a failure, for none of his children will succeed him on the throne of David to rule over Judah.'"

Jehoiachin did have children (1 Chron. 3:17-18), but he was considered to be childless in that "none of his children [would] succeed him on the throne of David" (Jer. 22:30). This curse on Jehoiachin (Jechoniah) continued through his ancestral line all the way down to Joseph. Going back to Matthew 1 and continuing in verses 12-16, we read:

**Matthew 1:12-16**

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

How could Jesus be the Messiah, the King of the Jews, when his father Joseph was under the curse of Jeconiah and therefore not permitted to reign? Here's the answer: Joseph was not involved in the bloodline of Jesus, because Jesus was born of a virgin (see v. 18)! Jesus' right to the throne of David came through the *legal* line – through *Mary*, who was descended from Nathan, Solomon's brother. Notice the "switch-over" that occurs in the family tree. To Jacob is born

“Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ” (v. 16). The link between Joseph and Jesus is the only one in the entire genealogy where the phrase “the father of” is not used. Why? Because Jesus was not Joseph’s biological son. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that “the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Furthermore, the pronoun “whom” in Matthew 1:16 is singular, referring to Mary alone.

If Jesus had been the biological son of Joseph, he would have been under the curse of Jeconiah and could never have been the Messiah. But because He was born of the virgin Mary, Jesus had the right to the throne by birth (through Mary) and also by adoption (through Joseph). Jesus’ unique ancestry exclusively qualifies Him to be the Messiah. And only the sovereign God could have orchestrated such a thing.

### Personal Consideration

The biblical record of Jesus’ ancestry presents us with two important questions to consider.

#### 1. Do you *recognize* Jesus as God’s anointed King?

Matthew wrote this genealogy of Jesus in the first century to Jews who could verify whether this record was true. Turn for just a moment to Luke’s Gospel (p. 806 in *pew Bible*). Luke was a meticulous historian. As Luke recounts Jesus’ birth in chapter 2, Luke begins by saying in verses 1-5:

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

In 1 Samuel 20:6, Bethlehem is referred to as David’s city. He was born there. This is where he grew up and tended his father’s sheep (1 Sam. 17:15). In fact, 1 Samuel 20:6 indicates that David and his relatives held an annual feast and family reunion there. It may be assumed that this is where the family records were kept<sup>6</sup> and thus where Jesus’ genealogy could be verified. Matthew presented his readers with airtight evidence that Jesus is God’s anointed King. The only remaining issue is whether they would accept it. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink. What about you? Have you drunk in the proof about Jesus Christ? *Do you recognize him as God’s anointed King?*

#### 2. Do you *revere* Jesus as *your* King?

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<sup>6</sup> William Hendriksen, *Luke*. New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1978), p. 142.

One interesting feature of Matthew's Gospel is that it opens the same way Genesis does. The word "genealogy" is the Greek term *genesis*, which means "beginning, origin, birth, genealogy." Just as Genesis is the book of beginnings, so is Matthew's Gospel. It not only presents Jesus' genealogy and the account of his birth, but it tells us *why* God sent his only Son to earth in the first place. In verse 21, the angel of the Lord tells Joseph, "you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Jesus would do this by living a perfect life on behalf of his people, by dying on the cross for their sins, and by rising victoriously from the grave. Every other human is born to live, but Jesus was born to die. Jesus' birth ushers in a new beginning for all who embrace him as their crucified and risen King. Scripture says that "anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new creation" – a new person. "The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

You *enter* this new life by believing in Jesus as your Savior-King, and you *express* this new life by being baptized as a profession of your faith. Our next baptism ceremony is scheduled for February 5. If you have not yet expressed your belief in Christ through baptism, why not make that commitment today? See me after the service or fill out one of our connection cards and check the box indicating that you'd like to know more about baptism. We'll be sure to follow up with you and prepare you for that wonderful event. It is not enough to *recognize* Jesus as God's anointed King, you must *revere* him as such.

David Jeremiah correctly stated, "All the Christmas presents in the world are worth nothing without the presence of Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup> Have you received him as your Savior? Do you honor him as your King?

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<sup>7</sup> "25 Quotes about Jesus Christ for Your Christmas." Crosswalk, 10 December 2020 [online]. Retrieved on 17 December 2022 from <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/inspiring-quotes/25-quotes-about-christ-for-your-christmas.html>; Internet.